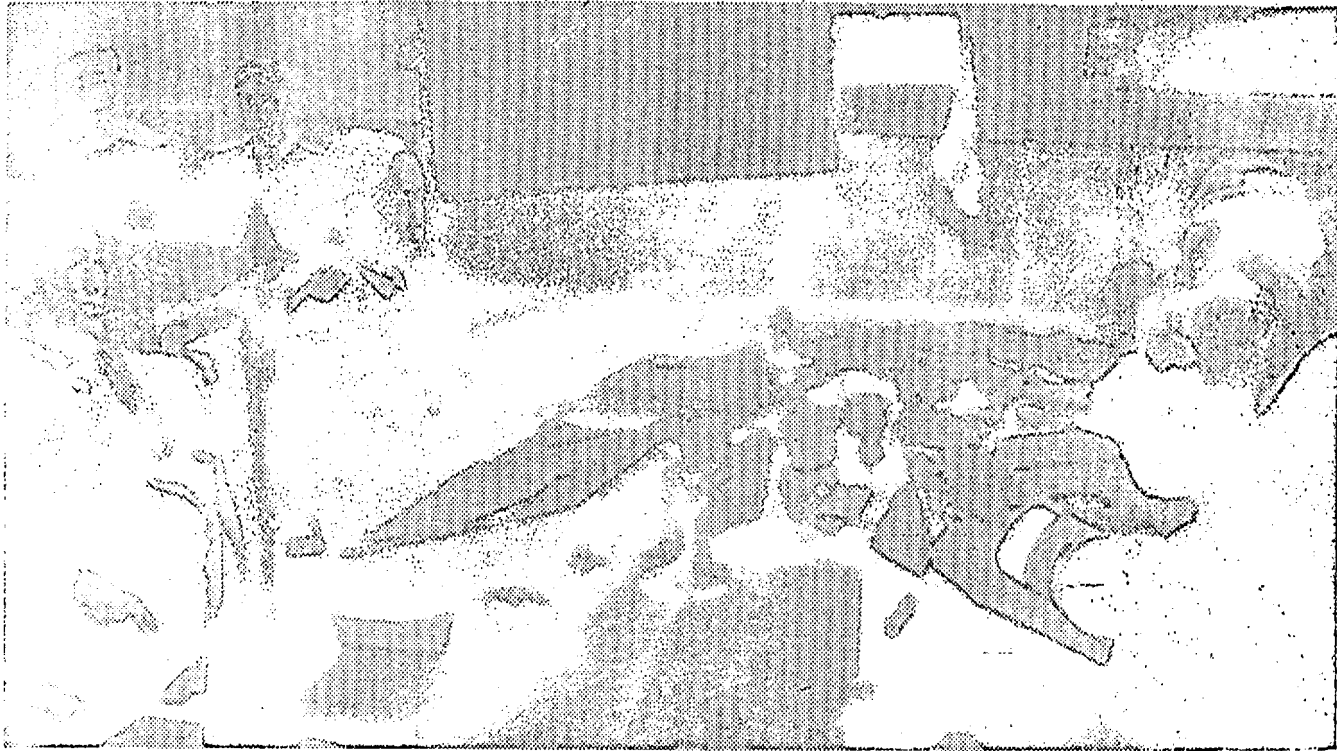


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# NORTH KOREA AND RUSSIA REBUFF U.S. EFFORTS TO FREE SEIZED SHIP; CAPTAIN'S 'CONFESSION' IS DERIDED



Associated Press

U.S. PROTEST: Rear Adm. John V. Smith at Panmunjom, Korea, yesterday, reading a statement about the seizure of the U.S.S. Pueblo. At left is Maj. Gen. Chung Kook Pak, North Korean delegate to Mixed Armistice Commission.

## NEW STEP STUDIED

### 2d Bid to Russia or to U.N. Weighed—Force Termed Last Resort

By PETER GROSE

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Jan. 24 — The United States was rebuffed today in initial diplomatic efforts to obtain the release of the intelligence ship Pueblo and her crew of 83, captured yesterday by the Communist regime of North Korea.

Administration spokesmen said that the Soviet Union brusquely refused to act on a

United States request that Moscow use its good offices with the North Koreans.

Qualified sources indicated, however, that further diplomatic initiatives would be attempted before there was any resort to military reprisals.

There was no clear idea inside the Administration about the most effective way to apply diplomatic pressures, but two lines of approach—through the United Nations, and a second appeal to the Soviet Union—were under active consideration.

As a move of general preparedness, the nuclear-powered carrier Enterprise and four destroyers escorts were directed to take up positions off the coast of South Korea. From there, North Korea would be only a few minutes away for the 90 jet aircraft on board the carrier.

## Rusk Warns North Koreans

Secretary of State Dean Rusk said the seizure was "in the category of actions to be construed as an act of war."

"My strong advice to North Koreans is to cool it," Mr. Rusk said after having given testimony in a closed session of the House Foreign Affairs Committee.

President Johnson summoned members of the National Security Council for a White House conference, the first meeting of the board since Nov. 23.

After the meeting, Administration officials indicated that the advice to "cool it" might be applied as well to speculation that immediate military action was contemplated to force the release of the ship and her crew.

Ambassador Llewellyn Thomson was reported to have been greeted with an immediate and negative response yesterday from the Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister, Vasily V. Kuznetsov, when he went to the Kremlin to urge the Russians to act.

Officials reported that the Soviet diplomat did not even accept the United States message for consideration by the Kremlin, he rejected it on the spot. The second immediate line of contact, a direct meeting

Continued

with North Korean officials at the military Armistice Commission in Panmunjon, produced equally unsatisfactory results.

The State Department spokesman, Robert J. McCloskey, described the reaction of the North Korean representative as "cynical, denunciatory of the United States and a distortion of the facts of the case."

The North Koreans contended that the Pueblo was carrying out acts of provocation — United States officials said this was patently false — and that she was within North Korean territorial waters.

Careful analysis at the Pen-Government offices of the ship's position in Wonsan Bay indicated that by no definition of territorial waters could it be said that the Pueblo was in illegal waters.

Mr. McCloskey said the Pueblo was "well beyond" the 12-mile territorial limit claimed by North Korea. Other sources said she may have been seized at a point as much as 25 miles off shore.

Defense Department planners considered several military options that are open to the United States should the diplomatic efforts fail. Among those under most serious discussion were the following:

Can attempt to storm into Wonsan harbor and forcibly retrieve the vessel.

Seizure or destruction of one or more North Korean ships as retaliation or for potential bargaining power.

Aerial bombing and sinking of the Pueblo at the Wonsan docks to deny Communist counterintelligence teams any further access to the electronic intelligence-gathering equipment on board.

A naval blockade of Wonsan and perhaps other North Korean ports.

Reconnaissance missions were said to have been flown over North Korea after the seizure of the Pueblo early yesterday. All Air Force and Navy units in the area received orders, however, to avoid any actions that might be considered provocation.

"It is still the hope of this Government that the matter can be resolved through diplomatic channels," George Christian, the White House press secretary said. Secretary Rusk said "we would like to see the Russians give us some help in this."

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United States officials acknowledge that Soviet influence in Pyongyang, the North Korea capital may be limited by Moscow's reluctance to alienate an Asian Communist regime that only recently was lured away from open alliance with China.

Moreover, there is evidence that the Russians have encouraged the North Koreans in recent months to carry on small scale acts of harassment and infiltration across the armistice demarcation line that separates North and South Korea.

Incidents of terrorism and ambushes against the South Korean people and installations have increased sharply since the North Korean regime adopted a policy of staging "diversionary" attacks to try drawing United States energies away from the war in Vietnam.

United States officials believe however, that the Russians have avoided urging any spectacular gestures, such as the seizure of an American ship, and for a particular reason.

These officials consider the Russians as vulnerable as the Americans to having one of their intelligence-gathering vessels captured or exposed. Soviet trawlers are often spotted following United States naval vessels or observing border installations from just outside territorial waters.

Any future approach to the Kremlin could imply the threat that a Soviet ship might be seized in retaliation. Though Mr. Thompson is understood to have been free to raise this matter in his talk with Mr. Kuznetsov, there is no indication that he had done so.

The Administration is in contact with friendly governments about the best means of applying diplomatic pressure on North Korea, but so far no acceptable course of action has been proposed.

The major difficulty is that the United States has no direct relations with the Pyongyang regime, and virtually no routine business that could provide a mechanism for bargaining. Britain and Canada are already reported to have indicated that they saw no way to play a useful role.

The Communist nations of Eastern Europe seem to offer the best hope of carrying out a mission of good offices, according to some officials. However, Administration spokesmen firmly declined to say whether a response would be sought through these channels.

State Department officials

said it was not likely that another direct approach would be made to North Korea, though a further meeting of the armistice commission, would be sought.

While top Administration officials worked on steps to recover the ship and her crew, others tried to assess the practical damage already done.

Government experts believe that some secret documents have already been captured by the North Koreans. One of the last radio messages from the Pueblo's skipper, Comdr. Lloyd M. Bucher, indicated that the crew had been unable to destroy all the secret files, according to reliable sources.

Equipment Believed Destroyed  
Officials believe, however, that all or most of the radio and radar eavesdropping equipment was destroyed when it became evident that the ship was in danger.

One qualified source said it would take about 30 minutes to complete the destruction of equipment and files. From the signals received there was not this much time between the moment Commander Bucher realized that the North Koreans intended to board the ship and the time they seized control.

Government sources report that there have been repeated instances lately of harassment by North Korean patrol boats of United States naval vessels,

without any actual threat to the ships.

#### Broadcasts Denounce U.S.

The North Koreans have denounced the United States recently as having made provocations in the seas off their shores.

A Pyongyang broadcast of Jan. 9, for instance, stated that on Jan. 6 the United States infiltrated "many armed boats, mingled with fishing boats, under the scort of armed warships, into the coastal waters of our side off the east coast to perpetrate provocative acts despite repeated warnings from our side."

"The U.S. imperialists aggressors," the broadcast continued, "have lately gone so far as to infiltrate boats carrying espionage and subversive elements. Between Dec. 2 and Dec. 18 last year more than 3,150 fishing boats and boats of spies were infiltrated into the coastal waters of our side on 14 occasions." The broadcast indicated that South Korean as well as American infiltrations were included in this figure.